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FROM: Daniel J. Basta
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SUBJECT: National Marine Sanctuary Program/National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science
Long Term Agreement – Phase II

In September of 2002, we initiated a Long Term Agreement (LTA)¹ between the National Marine Sanctuary Program (NMSP) and the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS). The focus of that original agreement was to coordinate the allocation of funds by NMSP to NCCOS in order to direct the efforts of scientists at sanctuaries' research and management needs. In the intervening five years, this agreement has grown from a loosely coordinated effort into a model of cross-line office collaboration, supported by the joint goodwill, hard work and determination of scientists and managers in both NMSP and NCCOS. As a result of this growth, over \$10 million dollars are brought to bear annually on stewardship issues of mutual concern within sanctuary boundaries.

The central goal of the original LTA was the biogeographic analysis of sanctuary sites, led by NCCOS' Center for Coastal Monitoring and Assessment. Other goals of the LTA were to conduct additional characterizations, design and implement monitoring, and conduct applied research in anticipation of sanctuary management needs. While the former needs remain, the latter goals have grown, creating the need for greater coordination and planning for effective joint use of resources in the next several years. Therefore, the purpose of this memo is to set out the operating principles for what we term "LTA II," which will guide many of our efforts and partnership activities over the next five years.

Agreement Goals

The goals of LTA II are as follows:

¹ http://www.nccos.noaa.gov/ecosystems/sanctuaries/pdfs/ONMS_NCCOS_LongTermCollab.pdf

1. Build a funding pool to continue competitively-funded projects, including intramural and extramural research, consultation, and associated travel by PIs and others in support of the LTA II activities.
2. Assist in developing and implementing NMSP System-Wide Monitoring (SWiM) and other observing programs by bringing to bear NCCOS design and ecological forecasting capabilities.
3. Provide NCCOS scientific input to sanctuary management plans when they are periodically revised.
4. Provide NCCOS scientific input for new sanctuary and/or monument delineation and selection.
5. Coordinate critical activities that would benefit from joint planning, such as vessel coordination, technology development, monitoring program development, and information assessment and reporting.

To meet these priorities under LTA II, there will be two primary areas of focus:

1. Project guidance and development
2. Joint planning and reporting

Project Guidance and Development

This activity will, in essence, continue the existing process of biannual funding of research priorities through the internal RFP (request for proposal) process. This process links the identified sanctuary needs with available NCCOS scientific expertise and directs the allocation of funds in support of projects meeting the RFP goals. Although the NMSP initially provided the primary funding in the LTA, in recent years, NCCOS has provided significant funds to this process, as was the intent under the original LTA. To continue this process, the Office Directors will meet annually at a time appropriate to the then-current budget process to review the RFP goals provided by the Program Managers and to determine allocation of the \$800K NMSP contribution as well as any additional funds that may be made available to support the RFP process. Each Office Director will commit \$100K to support components proposed in this Agreement. In addition, the Office Directors shall hold regular meetings (quarterly, or more frequently as needed) to monitor and discuss upcoming opportunities to further the partnership, evaluate short-term progress and improve visibility of the Agreement within NOAA.

The RFP process will continue its biannual structure, with the next RFP to be opened in FY 2008, for FY 2009-2010 funding. This unit will continue to be co-directed by a Program Manager from each office (currently Dr. Steve Gittings and Dr. Mark Fonseca, respectively). Under the LTA II, there will be an additional capability through NCCOS to solicit proposals from the extramural community for multidisciplinary research at a regional ecosystem scale in response to priority needs of the NMSP. As part of this capability, NCCOS, through the Center for Sponsored Coastal Ocean Research (CSCOR) has the authority to include federal researchers (including NOAA) as part of the research teams.

General research priorities for the LTA II

- Conducting elements of Integrated Ecosystem Assessments (IEAs) that address:
 - Management needs
 - Strategic program goals (e.g. potential new marine protected areas)
 - Particular processes of interest (e.g. understanding ecological connectivity among marine areas)

- Integration of NMSP needs and NCCOS science into an overall regional ecosystem perspective to:
 - Examine processes affecting sanctuaries deemed relevant by NMSP from a regional perspective, such as transport and dispersal processes, productivity and trophic interactions, source-sink processes and metapopulation dynamics
 - Address targeted issues of concern on ecosystem scales as determined by IEAs and other research prioritization processes in NCCOS and NMSP
- Improving monitoring and observing capacities by:
 - Implementing and managing effective monitoring programs, per the SWiM framework.
 - Conducting historical ecology investigations to understand past resource baselines and potential targets for restoration and management performance
 - Detect, and document shifts in ecosystem and climate processes at sentinel locations (long-term monitoring sites used to address key processes and living resource impacts, perhaps including previously under-studied phenomena such as ocean acidification).

Joint Planning and Reporting: This activity represents a new effort in the evolution of the LTA, the emphasis of which will be the coordination of efforts to advance the partnership outside of specific research projects. Each team is expected to meet at least annually and report findings and actions taken to the Program Managers.

- **Research Planning Team** (lead by the Program Managers) Engage in strategic planning to support:
 - Identification of annual priorities for NCCOS and NMSP, and potential collaborations involving program base funds
 - Developing annual guidance for LTA Request for Proposals and CSCOR Announcement of Opportunity, based on agency and program priorities
 - Recommending approaches to meeting research needs that consider required geographic scales, agency and external partners and alliances, and funding mechanisms
 - Facilitating activities related to applied historical ecology.
- **Regional Vessel Planning Teams:** Work together to improve success with acquisition of NOAA ship time, efficiently utilize the sanctuary fleet, and enhance research that addresses priority NMSP needs:
 - NMSP and NCCOS speak as one voice in fleet allocation meetings.
 - Coordinate during critical times to evaluate future vessel needs and organize regional vessel user groups and work in cooperation, not competition for ship time.
 - Respond to evolving fleet allocation plans needs through creative adaptation of cruise plans and vessel allocations.
- **Technology Team:**
 - Identify emerging technologies.
 - Identify and coordinate vessel-associated resources, such as specialized equipment and sensors, NOAA technical divers, other specialized skill sets.

- **Information Team:** Engage in strategic planning and RFP management; optimize integration of reporting and dissemination among NMSP and NCCOS:
 - Articulate how proposed research addresses specific management priorities and performance measures.
 - Provide NCCOS scientific input to sanctuary management plans as they are periodically revised; provide NCCOS scientists as resources for sanctuary advisory councils and research advisory councils.
 - Provide NCCOS scientific input for the assessment and delineation of potential new sanctuaries or monuments (e.g., support compilation of materials [web-based maps, graphics, management plans, and biogeographic assessments]).
 - Provide NCCOS expertise to NMSP educators to facilitate the transfer of current research to a variety of public audiences, including:
 - PI presentations to sanctuary site staff and council members
 - Serve as consultants during the development of curriculum materials or exhibits based on their projects or support these using their expertise
 - Convene periodic information transfer meetings involving NCCOS and NMSP staff to report on findings and plan for future individual and cooperative efforts.

Assignments of individuals to these tasks will require action by the Office Directors or their designees. Participants will provide the Office Directors with an implementation plan and timetable for their approval, where appropriate. Staff duties may be reflected as a critical element in annual performance plans. The Program Managers will be responsible for organizing a biennial review of LTA II, punctuated by annual update documents. The Program Manager duties will be reflected as a critical element in the manager's annual performance plan.

As the LTA evolves from the discrete structure of an RFP-based program to include an active integrative function, the LTA process will demand a degree of active participation from across NCCOS and NMSP that does not currently exist. The success of this evolution will require significant energy from the Office Directors and their designees to educate their staffs as to their expectation of active engagement, partly through addition of these activities as performance plan elements. Additional staff and rotational assignments are likely to be required to achieve the focus required for effective implementation.

cc:

John H. Dunnigan, Assistant Administrator, NOS

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